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ABSTRACT

Faculty course load requirements and their relationship to college size (small, medium, or large), location (north, south, middle, or west), and degree of faculty participation in work condition policy determination were the concern of this National Faculty Association of Community and Junior Colleges' study. Of the 993 junior colleges contacted, 242 returned study questionnaires, providing data for the following conclusions: size of faculty course load showed no significant correlation with size of college, although there was some tendency for smaller colleges to demand more contact time than middle or larger ones; size of faculty course load was most frequently lower in the northern and middle regions, and only in these regions has any significant advance been made in reducing the maximum teaching load; size of faculty course load in the junior colleges was far heavier in terms of contact and credit hours than at most 4-year colleges; and faculty participation in determining their work conditions was slight, and, where existent, was most often asserted through negotiated faculty and administrative agreements. (JO)

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FACULTY WORK LOAD

Report of a Survey in Two-Year Colleges

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

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National Faculty Association of Community and Junior Colleges
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In response to repeated requests for information on faculty teaching loads in community and junior colleges, the National Faculty Association last fall undertook a survey of public two-year colleges on the subject. The results were surprising, to say the least, and not a little discouraging.

The survey showed that faculties in two-year colleges carry far heavier teaching loads than do their colleagues in four-year institutions, and that they are expected to spend far more time in student contact outside the classroom. The national average for two-year colleges is between 15 and 18 hours per week, with at least one extra hour of contact expected for every hour of credit given.

The National Faculty Association believes that the maximum course load for community/junior college teaching should not exceed 12 contact hours, yet we found few institutions which required less than 15 credit hours per week. Some loads were as high as 24 and 25 hours per week! Not a single responding college had a required maximum of less than 12 hours.

Only in those regions--the North, Middle, ~~and~~ West--where faculties have asserted a voice in the decision-making process via professional negotiations has a beginning been made in the reduction of teaching loads below the 15-hour level. And even in these areas less than one-fifth of the faculties have achieved this goal. Clearly there is work to be done by community/junior college faculties all across the country if they are to approach the kind of optimum conditions that will allow them to perform to the best of their abilities.

Donald J. Keck
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Spring 1970

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The Method

The National Faculty Association of Community and Junior Colleges (NFACJC) requested information on Faculty course loads from approximately 993 two-year colleges. Responses were received and tabulated from some 242.

The resulting data was arranged according to the size of college enrollments, i.e., colleges with enrollment under 1,000, those with enrollment between 1,000 and 2,000, and those enrolling over 2,000 students; and according to geographical location of the institution, categorized as North, South, Middle, and West.

Questions were asked on the minimum and maximum course load requirements on a particular campus, on the relationship of contact to credit hours, and on the formula used to equate the two if there was a difference. Other questions examined the frequency of "special situations" such as developmental courses or physical education, and the availability of technical assistants.

Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate to the best of their knowledge the method of determining course load on their campus. Options given in the latter question were, for the purpose of analysis, roughly divided into policies in which the faculty had some determining role, and those in which they did not. Specifically, the former included "negotiated agreement," "faculty senate or committee," and "members of department;" the latter, "administrative decree," "policy manual," and "tradition."

The Objectives

The objectives of the study were to survey the general course load requirements of faculty in junior and community colleges, to compare course loads in different areas and in colleges of differing sizes, and, perhaps most important, to determine the relationship, if any, between faculty participation in the determination of policies relating to their conditions of work and the actual conditions themselves--in this case, course load. It was hypothesized that those colleges in which the faculty had the most to say about their teaching load would most nearly approach an ideal 12 hour credit-contact maximum.

General Findings

The results of the study, however, revealed that few colleges, indeed, set their maximum at 12 hours (20 colleges in all, or 8.4 percent) and none set it below 12 hours. Although certain features peculiar to size and geographical area could be distinguished, the important question of faculty participation in determining course

load showed only a slightly lighter load in those areas where faculty participation was greatest.

There is some correlation on a regional basis between those areas in which faculties have asserted their prerogatives--usually in the form of negotiated agreements--and those in which maximum course load is lowest (North and Middle). At the same time, however, while faculty in the smallest colleges (enrollment under 1,000) had more to say in determining course load, this was actually negatively reflected in the data on maximum required hours. Not only was maximum load higher in small colleges, but contact hours were less frequently equated with credit hours, resulting in a much greater amount of time spent in contact with students on small college campuses. In order to approach an explanation of the results of this study, and, more specifically, to make some statement on the relationship between faculty participation in determining their hours and conditions of work and the actual resultant conditions, it will first be useful to discuss in greater detail the results of the responses received.

Details and Analysis of Findings

In the data on maximum course load requirements, there was a tendency in all areas and sizes to group around 15 to 18 hours. Seventy-seven and one half percent of all colleges fell into this category, while only 11.2 percent set the maximum course load under 15 hours.[1] No college set its maximum under 12 hours, and 4 percent might require over 20 hours. One college reported its maximum as 28 hours, and, perhaps more ominously, 5 set no maximum at all.

Maximum Credit Hour Load

	Enrollment under 1,000		Enrollment 1,000-1,999		Enrollment 2,000 & over		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
none set	2	2.2	1	1.2	2	2.6	5	2.1
12-14	8	8.9	10	13.1	9	11.7	27	11.2
15	27	30.3	17	22.4	19	24.7	63	26.0
16-18	42	47.2	36	47.4	31	40.3	109	45.1
over 18	7	7.8	6	10.5	11	14.3	26	10.6
no response	3	3.4	4	5.3	5	6.5	12	5.0
Totals	89	99.8	76	100.0	77	100.1	242	100.0

NOTE: On all tables the percentages may not add up to 100.0 percent because of rounding off.

[1] For general purposes, hours will be considered "credit hours" not necessarily contact hours, although the responses did reflect some confusion in distinguishing the two.

Eighty-five and one half percent of colleges with an enrollment under 1,000 (76 out of 89), 80.2 percent of colleges with an enrollment 1,000 and 2,000 (61 out of 76), and 79.3 percent of colleges with an enrollment over 2,000 (61 out of 77), set the maximum between 15 and 18 hours.

Eight and nine-tenths percent of small colleges, 13.1 percent of medium-sized colleges, and 11.7 percent of the largest colleges set their maximum under 15 hours; 3 small colleges, 3 medium-sized colleges, and 4 large colleges set the maximum over 20 hours. So far, it would appear that there is little significant relationship between course load and size of college. The information on contact vs. credit hours, however, confirmed and intensified the impression of a slightly higher maximum requirement in smaller colleges.

Relation of Contact Hours
to Credit Hours

	Enrollment under 1,000		Enrollment 1,000-1,999		Enrollment 2,000 & over		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
same	10	11.2	19	25.0	16	20.8	45	18.6
different	74	83.1	55	72.4	57	74.0	186	76.9
no response	5	5.6	2	2.6	4	5.2	11	4.5
Totals	89	99.9	76	100.0	77	100.0	242	100.0

Explanation: Most indicated the difference referred to lab courses, activity courses, or those with heavy classes and outside supervision.

Eighty-three percent of the smallest colleges reported a difference in contact and credit hours. Of those indicating a formula was used to equate the two, 51.9 percent gave the ratio as 2 contact hours to 1 credit hour, and 14.8 percent gave it as 3 contact hours to 1 credit hour. Comparatively, only 72.4 percent of the middle-sized colleges and 74 percent of larger colleges indicated a difference between contact and credit hours; and of these, 51.7 percent and 77.9 percent, respectively, gave the formula ratio at 1½ contact to 1 credit or less.

In sum, then, the smallest colleges require their faculties to spend more contact time in relation to credit time with their students, and demand as well a slightly higher overall maximum teaching load.

Maximum Credit Hour Load

	North		South		Middle		West		Total*	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
none set	--	--	--	--	3	3.7	2	2.9	5	2.1
12-14	11	16.5	2	7.4	13	16.1	1	1.5	27	11.4
15	25	39.7	13	48.1	12	14.8	13	19.1	63	26.4
16-18	21	33.3	10	37.0	43	53.1	33	48.5	117	34.8
over 18	3	4.8	1	3.7	6	7.4	15	21.1	25	10.4
no response	3	4.8	1	3.7	4	4.9	4	5.9	12	5.0
Totals	63	99.1	27	99.9	81	100.0	68	99.0	239	90.1

*Three responses could not be tabulated.

In the geographical breakdown of maximum course load, colleges in the North set their maximum lower than those in the other three regions, 16.5 percent of 63 setting it below 15 hours, and only 4.8 percent over 18 hours. In the Middle region, 16.1 percent of 81 colleges set the maximum below 15 hours, but 53.1 percent set it at 16-18 hours, while 7.4 percent were over 18 hours, and three set no maximum at all. Of 27 colleges in the South, 85.1 percent set their maximum hours between 15 and 18 hours, and only 3.7 percent, or one college, set a maximum of more than 18 hours. Colleges in the West set by far the highest maximum hour requirements, with 21.1 percent of 68 colleges setting over 18 hours maximum, and only one college setting its maximum under 15 hours. Seven out of a total of 10 colleges requiring over 20 hours maximum were located in the West.

Relation of Contact Hours
to Credit Hours

	North		South		Middle		West		Total*	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
same	10	15.9	2	7.4	19	23.5	13	19.1	44	18.4
different	51	81.0	23	85.2	58	71.6	52	76.5	184	77.0
no response	2	3.2	2	7.4	4	4.9	3	4.4	11	4.6
Totals	63	100.1	27	100.0	81	100.0	68	100.0	239	100.0

*Three responses could not be tabulated.

As we have seen, colleges in the North and Middle regions set lower course loads more frequently than those in the West and South regions. The data on contact vs. credit hours again indicates that the most reasonable demands on faculty time are made in the Middle region, where nearly a quarter of the colleges (23.5 percent) equate contact and credit hours, as compared with 19.1 percent in the West, where maximum course loads are the highest, and 15.9 percent in the North. The lowest incidence of equating contact and credit hours is in the South (7.4 percent).

Determination of Course Load Policy

The data on determination of course load policy, like that on maximum course loads, yields no particularly startling results. One might expect the relationship between course load and the interests determining it to be clearer than it is. Perhaps one of the greatest problems in analyzing the data on this question was that, although a wide range of possible answers was written into the questionnaire, many respondents did not appear to be very certain of policies on their own campus, often checking two or more contradictory options. For the purposes of analysis the choices were divided roughly into two categories: Those which indicated that faculty participation was involved, and those which were clearly the expression of administrative or other external power.

Faculty Involvement in Determination of Work Load

	Enrollment under 1,000		Enrollment 1,000-1,999		Enrollment 2,000 & over		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
by negotiated agreement	10	11.2	13	17.1	14	18.2	37	15.3
by policy manual	11	12.4	10	13.2	9	11.7	30	12.4
by tradition	15	16.9	12	15.8	16	20.8	43	17.8
by members of department	4	4.5	1	1.3	1	1.3	6	2.5
by administrative decree	18	20.2	20	26.3	9	11.7	47	19.4
by faculty senate or committee	8	9.0	2	2.6	4	5.2	14	4.8
no response	1	1.1	--	--	2	2.6	3	1.2
more than one of above*	15	16.9	17	22.4	21	27.3	53	21.9
state regulation	5	5.6	1	1.3	--	--	6	2.5
consensus of faculty and administration	2	2.2	--	--	1	1.3	3	1.2
Totals	89	100.0	76	100.0	77	100.1	242	99.0
Total implying faculty participation	24	26.2	16	21.0	20	26.0	60	24.8

*In most cases this was "by administrative decree" coupled with one or two of the other items; majority listed "by administrative decree" and "by tradition."

In the 89 colleges whose enrollment was under 1,000, 26.9 percent indicated that some faculty participation had gone into the determination of course load, usually in the form of negotiated agreements (11.2 percent), or faculty senate/committee decision (9 percent). Of the 76 colleges with enrollment between 1,000 and 2,000, only 21 percent reported any faculty participation, 17.1 percent of which was by negotiated agreement. In the 77 colleges with enrollment over 2,000, 26 percent reported some form of faculty voice in decision making--18.2 percent through negotiations, 5.2 percent through faculty senates. Administrative decree was far more frequently cited in the middle-sized colleges (26.3 percent as opposed to 20.2 percent in small colleges and 11.2 percent in large ones), while tradition was the determinant in 20.8 percent of large colleges, as opposted to 16.9 percent in small ones and 15.8 percent in middle-sized colleges. State regulations were most often determinant in small colleges (5 out of a total of 6 instances). It is difficult to see how any significant generalizations can be made on the basis of this data which would not distort the reality of the situation--a reality which appears to recognize little difference, based on size of college, in faculty participation in determining conditions of work.

Geographic Area and Determination of Work Load

	North		South		Middle		West		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
by negotiated agreement	9	14.3	1	3.7	21	25.9	6	8.8	37	15.5
by policy manual	12	19.0	2	7.4	4	4.9	12	17.6	30	12.6
by tradition	5	7.9	7	25.9	17	21.0	13	19.1	42	17.6
by members of department	2	3.2	--	--	3	3.7	1	1.5	6	2.5
by administrative decree	11	17.5	8	29.6	13	15.9	13	19.1	45	18.8
by faculty senate or committee	4	6.3	1	3.7	5	6.2	4	5.9	14	5.9
combination of more than one of above	19	30.2	7	25.9	13	15.9	17	25.0	56	23.4
state regulation	--	--	1	3.7	5	6.2	--	--	6	2.5
no response	1	1.6	--	--	--	--	2	2.9	3	1.3
Totals	63	100.0	27	99.9	81	99.7	68	99.9	239	100.1
Total implying faculty participation	15	23.8	2	7.4	29	35.8	11	16.2	57	23.9

In 29 out of 81 colleges in the Middle region (35.8 percent), and in 15 out of 63 colleges in the North region (23.8 percent), the faculty had some voice in policy making, whether through negotiated agreement (25.9 percent in the Middle region, 14.3 percent in the North region), by faculty senate (6.2 percent and 6.3 percent) or by department members (3.7 percent and 3.2 percent).

In comparison, in only 2 out of 27 southern colleges did the faculty have any voice at all in the determination of course load. Colleges in the South seemed most bound to administrative decree (29.6 percent) and tradition (25.9 percent). Likewise, the West was also more bound to policy making from above than either the North or Middle: Eighty and nine-tenths percent of western colleges determined course load by tradition, administrative decree, policy manual, or some combination of these factors. Generally, a response of a combination of factors indicated confusion, and, perhaps, even misinformation about the determination of policy.

It is interesting that the Middle region had both the least ambiguity in their policy determinations (15.9 percent reporting a "combination" as opposed to the national average of 23.4 percent) and the greatest success in negotiating agreements (25.9 percent as opposed to the national average of 15.5 percent).

The data on how faculty course load was determined in the country's community colleges reveals that in only 24.8 percent of all colleges did faculty claim any control over the setting of policy. In 50.8 percent of the colleges policy was definitely out of their control; and, in the remaining 21.9 percent in which a combination of factors was listed, the multiples were either two or more of the elements of administrative control, or factors combined in such a way as to make it impossible for policy not to redound to the advantage of the administration; e.g., faculty senate combined with administrative decree. Thus in an alarming 72.6 percent of all community colleges the faculty had almost nothing to say about the conditions and hours of their work. And, when the comparatively high degree of faculty power in the Middle is considered (35.8 percent claiming faculty participation as against the national average of 23.9 percent), the picture in the rest of the country is bleak indeed.

Conclusions

Comparison of the policy-determination data with the actual conditions of work do not, as we have seen, present a clear picture. To recall the earlier conclusions of the study, size of the college did not make a very significant difference in faculty load, although smaller colleges generally tended to demand more contact time of their faculty than middle-sized or large colleges. Northern colleges, and to a lesser extent those in the Middle area, most frequently required a lower maximum teaching load, while faculties in the Middle region were more often able to equate contact and credit hours than were those in the rest of the country.

The data on faculty participation in determining course load did not reveal any great difference corresponding to size of college enrollment. There did, however, seem to be some correlation between the more rational demands of the North and Middle regions in terms of teaching loads and the greater degree of faculty participation in these areas. As we have seen, it is in the Middle region, which boasts the greatest degree of faculty participation, that contact and credit hours are most often equated (23.5 percent). On the crucial issue of reducing maximum teaching loads to 12 hours, only in the North (16.5 percent) and Middle (16.1 percent) has any significant advance been achieved. Modest though these figures are, they are double those in the South (7.4 percent), while the West (1.5 percent under 15 hours, 69.6 percent over 15 hours) lags far behind other regions in attaining reasonable course load requirements, and it is precisely in the West and South that the least amount of faculty participation is reported.

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the study is that faculties on community college campuses carry far heavier teaching loads in terms of contact and credit hours than do faculties of most four-year colleges. A second and likewise obvious conclusion is that the degree of faculty participation in determining hours and conditions of work is very slight in most areas.[1] Where it exists at all, in the North and Middle regions of the country, it is most often and effectively asserted in the form of negotiated agreements between faculty and administration. As we have seen, in the Middle region, which claims 21 out of a national total of 37 negotiated agreements, course load maximums are among the lowest, and contact-credit hour equation most frequent.

It would seem that in the areas where negotiations have been the primary vehicle for the assertion of faculty prerogative, course loads have been perceptibly adjusted in favor of a more rational use of faculty time.

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[1]It is important to note that the data did not indicate whether faculty participation had effected a reduction in course load in relationship to what it had been previously in a particular college. Further study using a historical approach might yield more fruitful answers.